

February 16, 2017

Re: FY 2018-19 Governors Budget

To the members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am deeply concerned about the proposed FY 2018-19 Governors Budget, which continues cuts from the present year, which resulted in a 45% cut in seasonal employees, the closures of campgrounds and services across the state, including open hours at rest areas on our highways. Additionally, the 50% cut in the Community Investment Act diverts funds from open space protection, farmland preservation, affordable housing, historic preservation, and support for dairy farmers. All these cuts impact quality of life issues - the very issues that draw and keep population in Connecticut - and the very issues that return far more economic benefit than they cost. Connecticut tourism suffers from these closures - another economic loss.

The elimination of the Council on Environmental Quality is short sighted and dangerous. Further reductions in the DEEP can only reduce effective outdoor programs, diminish environmental protection, leave our 169 towns with insufficient expertise with which to address their wetlands and watercourse issues.

Investment in our State Parks, our historic heritage, and our open space returns far more to the state coffers and the economy than it costs. Instead of cutting that which makes our state a great place to live and visit, raise the state income tax on the super wealthy and create a separate account where funds generated by the DEEP and the Parks can be set aside to cover the cost of seasonal employees and park maintenance. We have a wonderful state with many outdoor opportunities, a decent environmental record, historic places, and tourist attractions. Don't defund these assets. Please.

Very sincerely yours,

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